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Marriage Migration and Integration, by Katharine Charsley, Marta Bolognani, Evelyn Ersanilli and Sarah Spencer, Cham, Palgrave, 2020, xix+323pp., €72.79(hardback), ISBN 978-3-030-40251-8

The book subjects the claim that marriage migration is bad for integration – an empirically unsubstantiated policy narrative that has gathered momentum over the last decade, culminating in the 2012 immigration rules and 2016 Casey Review – to rigorous empirical examination. It is based on a comparative study of British Pakistani Muslims and Indian Sikhs, an apt empirical base because both groups have topped the charts of spousal immigrant numbers for the last many decades, but also because they are positioned very differently in relation to concerns over integration. The research is an exemplary combination of quantitative and qualitative research, using the two prongs of the study in a genuinely iterative way, with findings from one side of the study generating hypotheses that are worked through in the other. Ersanilli pooled UK Quarterly Labour Force Survey rounds from 2004-18 to generate a sufficient number of Pakistani Muslim and Indian Sikh respondents to be able to carry out impressively deft and imaginative analyses comparing the profiles and trajectories of those married within the UK ethnic group with those in intra-ethnic transnational marriages. This design was matched in the qualitative side of the study, led by Bolognani, which focussed on sibling pairs in which one sibling had married within the ethnic group in the UK and another had married transnationally. This makes for highly illuminating qualitative material sifting through the possibility that differences in individuals' backgrounds that might be independently related to integration might also be associated with transnational marriage.

The book offers a number of novel empirical findings. Chapter 4 shows that the popularity of transnational marriages appears to have decreased over time. Whilst half of married British-born Pakistani Muslims have transnational marriages, compared to a third of married British-born Indian Sikh men and a quarter of British-born Indian Sikh women (p.89), the analysis by age cohort shows a clear downward trend, which is independent of the increased education of younger cohorts (p.91,

97). Lower levels of education are generally associated with transnational marriage (p.96), implying that the practice is more likely to be eschewed by those with greater 'marital capital', or bargaining power in 'marriage markets'; but still nearly half of British-born Pakistani Muslims with a post-secondary education had married in Pakistan (p.100). There are some suggestions in the wider literature that transnational marriages might offer a channel for educational hypergamy, with less educated British-born spouses exchanging migration opportunities for educational capital in the migrating spouse. This suggestion is discounted by the quantitative data, which finds educational homogamy to be the dominant pattern in transnational and intra-national marriages. However, if we look in relation to educational profiles in the countries of origin, there is strong evidence of educational selectivity: migrant spouses have a far higher educational profile compared to the general population, and a substantial proportion of migrant spouses highly educated.

The socio-economic profile of migrant spouses thus challenges policy framings of migrant spouses as uneducated. Equally, the idea that migrant wives are 'culturally inhibited' from labour market integration is also challenged by Chapter 5 on working life, which finds instead abundant evidence of discrimination in the labour market for migrant spouses of both genders. Both migrant wives and husbands are more likely than their British co-ethnic counterparts to be in low-skilled employment, which is the case even after taking education and English language ability into account. The household emerges as a crucial 'effector' for labour market integration, particularly for women. Even in situations where migrant women wanted to work, or study further, they were often barred from doing so because of family-building expectations and childcare obligations, as mediated through any support that might be provided by their husband's families. Migrant husbands, who were very likely to work, were equally dependent on the receiving family, in directing them towards employment.

Chapters 6 develops this insight to the fundamental role of the receiving family context in providing or withholding emotional, informational and instrumental support, and – in influencing their access

to work, education, and the neighbourhood – channelling their wider social integration. Chapter 6 highlights that racial discrimination does not just operate in relation to other ethnic groups but also internally, with some migrant spouses reporting that the hardest thing they had endured since arriving in the UK was humiliation from British-born spouses and family members, calling them 'freshies' ('Fresh Off the Boat') and teasing them about their accent or lack of cultural capitals, and also that with religious, regional, caste and class cleavages within the ethnic groups, 'social relationships which might be viewed from standard analytic positions as ethnic or familial "bonding", instead involve a significant degree of social "bridging"' (p.188). Chapter 7 explores extended family living, which is not unusual in intra-national marriages – a fifth of intra-nationally married British-born couples – but is more frequent for migrant wife couples, and less common for migrant husband couples. Here, there are fascinating returns to Charsley's earlier work on 'unhappy' migrant husbands, and the quantitative data show that, bucking the patri-virilocal tradition, in the first five years after migration, one in five migrant husbands live with their wife's family. The data supports the idea that British-born women may gain in domestic power through transnational marriages, not just by distancing herself from in-laws' demands, but also by retaining proximity to their own kin.

Redirecting the debates on integration, the book highlights the interconnection between social domains, as seen in the role of receiving families in channelling migrant spouses towards or away from employment. It also highlights the crucial role of temporal and life-course dimensions, which interact with policies affecting transnational couples in important ways – as with the migrant spouses barred from employment because their overseas qualifications are not recognised, whilst unable to convert their qualifications because of lack of access to student funding, combined with the costs of family-building. In such ways, policy narratives pivoted on Britain's self-image of egalitarian family and gender relationships being confronted by the importation of unemancipated 'others' are belied by the role of the state itself, in creating and sustaining these predicaments.

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